

GROUND WATER PROTECTION STEERING COMMITTEE

Meeting Summary for September 9, 2002

PLEASE NOTE:

The next meeting of the Steering Committee will be held on Tuesday, November 19, 2002, from 9 AM – 11 AM, Department of Environmental Quality, Seventh Floor Conference Room, 629 East Main Street, in Richmond.

Contact Mary Ann Massie at 804-698-4042 for details

ATTENDANCE:

Steering Committee members in attendance:

- *Chris Adkins*, Virginia Department of Health (VDH), Division of Drinking Water
- *Dean Bailey*, Virginia Department of Business Assistance (VDBA)
- *Larry Lawson*, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Water Division Director
- *Mary Ann Massie*, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Water Division
- *Randy McFarland*, United States Geological Survey (USGS)
- *Frank Dukes*, facilitator, *Brandi Collins*, recorder, Institute for Environmental Negotiation, University of Virginia

Also in attendance:

- *Sam Hamilton*, Virginia Agribusiness Council (VAC)
- *Judy Poff*, Virginia Water Resources Research Center (VWRRC)

Agencies not in attendance:

- Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
- Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE)
- Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy (DMME)
- Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Department (CBLAD)
- Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)

AGENCY UPDATES

Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Water Division

Larry Lawson reported that a substantial portion of their attention is directed at problems caused by the drought. Terry Wagner is spending considerable time responding to public concerns. Nobody has yet suggested any new legislation to address drought related issues.

The state budget situation has been raising concern at DEQ. About twenty-seven hourly wage personnel were recently laid off. No permanent employees have yet to be laid off. Other

expenses, such as travel and training, have been cut way back in order to preserve personnel. DEQ had to put together a three-year budget plan for scenarios of 7%, 11%, and 15% budget cuts. The most significant impact of these cuts will not likely occur until 2004. DEQ receives federal funds for a substantial portion of its work, so cuts at the state level, although bad, are not as devastating to them as they are to other agencies.

Mary Ann Massie reported that the workplan for the 2003 Section 106 ground water protection grant has been submitted to EPA. DEQ has not yet received a response, but they anticipate approval by end of the month.

Frank Dukes added that the Institute for Environmental Negotiation is facilitating two Technical Advisory Committees created by DEQ to address concerns over the combined impacts of new and proposed power plants. Members of the Water Technical Advisory Committee are in the process of recommending options for DEQ to consider. A number of these will involve ground water monitoring and regulation. The next Water Technical Advisory Committee meeting will be held on Sept. 12 to discuss options. A final meeting will be held on October 9, 2002 and the final report will be developed within a few weeks after that.

Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Waste Division (in absentia)

Howard Freeland reported by e-mail that the new program hire rejected the position the day before he was to begin work. DEQ will try to rehire, but with the budget cuts, he doesn't know whether and when that can occur.

United States Geological Survey (USGS)

Randy McFarland reported that USGS surface and ground water specialists, Dan Hayes and David Nelms, are busy giving technical assistance to people affected by the drought. The budget for next year has not been finalized but it looks as though it will be stable, with USGS not expecting any significant increases or decreases in funding.

The Aquifer vulnerability study is almost complete. The Northern Shenandoah, Virginia Beach, and Polecat Creek projects are continuing according to plan. The Virginia Coastal Plain Project had three elements to report:

1. The impact crater core drilling at Watkins Creek excavated only thirty feet of crater fill, so the core taken is near the crater rim.
2. Geochemical sampling of the 1,300+-foot deep well center at Kiptopeke on the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge has begun. This is the deepest well among a cluster of wells nested together and the only one tested to date. A 1,700 ft. cased well has very low yields (less than a gallon a minute) and will require a long period of pumping (weeks-to-months) to adequately develop and purge prior to sample collection. A solar-powered pump, needed because of the absence of permanent electrical power at the remote location, has been found for the well. Good evidence exists that the water is at least 2 million years old.

3. USGS is beginning the final phase of delineating the Coastal Plain hydrogeologic framework in the York-James Peninsula. It may take 1-2 years for this part of the study to be complete.

Virginia Department of Health (VDH), Division of Drinking Water

Chris Adkins discussed three topics: Post-911 water system security, the current drought, and the Source Water Assessment Program.

1) Post-911 Water Security - The Safe Drinking Water Act was amended after September 11 of last year to include a vulnerability assessment requirement to secure public drinking water supplies. Virginia has sixteen large systems in the category of community water systems serving 100,000 or more users, but none of those systems rely on ground water. For community public systems serving between 3,300 and 99,999 people, operators will be able to use new software, the Vulnerability Self-Assessment Tool (VSAT), to conduct assessments. VSAT was originally developed for wastewater, but VDH-DDW is working with the producers of VSAT to tailor it for drinking water. VDH-DDW has added such factors as drought and forest fires to the software. It will be piloted in Virginia first and will then be offered free to all applicable systems nationwide. These vulnerability assessments must be completed by late 2003 or early 2004.

Software is already available for systems serving 100,000 persons. This software is not free. These systems are required to complete assessments by March 31, 2003.

The Association of State Drinking Water Administrators (ASDWA) (<http://www.asdwa.org/>) and the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) developed a template "Security Vulnerability Self-Assessment Guide for Small Drinking Water Systems" for public water systems serving populations between 25 and 3,299 people. This template became available last June for their vulnerability assessments. There are no mandates requiring that they conduct vulnerability assessments.

Grants will be available for public systems serving 100,000 persons and above and for those systems serving less than 100,000 persons.

2) The Drought - The Drought Monitoring Taskforce has been providing information to Terry Wagner on water systems already in trouble in addition to newly reported imperiled major systems. The reports have been due monthly but are now due weekly. The reports indicate the effect of conservation efforts. These reports will be available on the web-site. Concerns have arisen as drinking water supplies will be affected once schools are back in session and people return from vacation.

3) Source Water Assessment Program - Virginia Source Water Assessment Program is further along in completing the assessments for water systems as compared to the other states in EPA Region III. Five of six field offices have finished their surface water assessments (130 of 150 systems are complete). Non-transient non-community systems, such as factories, are scheduled to be complete with their assessments by the end of October and three of six field offices have finished already. Transient non-community water supply systems, such as "mom and pop stores" or day-care centers, pose more problems. Only two out of six field offices have completed all of their assessments, which are due April 30, 2003. Problems include the absence of records and

ensuring accuracy of data. When these assessments are complete, VDH-DDW will have a more complete documentation of public water systems in Virginia.

There was some discussion of wellhead protection efforts. Virginia does not have an EPA-approved Wellhead Protection Program. Although EPA prefers states to have such a program, Virginia has argued that the effort to create an approved program would take resources away from the wellhead protection activities that Virginia already promotes. Although there is funding to help create such a program, no funds exist for implementation. Implementation is voluntary and must be done on a local level.

Department of Business Assistance (DBA)

Dean Bailey reported that the impact of the drought on Virginia's businesses has been significant, causing several companies to lay off second and third shift operations. Most affected companies have asked that this information not be reported fearing that their competitors could benefit from it.

Budget cuts earlier this year forced the layoff of the Industry Liaison staff that provided intelligence about major issues and specific problems facing Virginia companies. The Department in turn provided direct assistance to businesses. Bailey has been charged with the task of devising a means of maintaining the Department's ongoing relationship with their traditional client base using technology.

NON-MEMBER UPDATES

Virginia Water Resources Research Center (VWRRC)

Judy Poff reported that budget cuts have already forced reductions in staff. Former Director Len Shabman's position will not be replaced. Tamim Younos is serving as Interim Director. With the budget cuts, Virginia Tech is looking at alternative organizational plans for the Center. Other announcements included:

- A regional coalfield Symposium was held on September 4, 2002. Co-sponsors included the Powell River Project and the University of Virginia at Wise. This Symposium occurs biennially and is devoted to water resource problems that coalfield counties face.
- VWRRC is sponsoring a Stubbles Creek watershed forum and festival. It will be held along with an EPA workshop on use attainability analysis on October 18, 2002 in Blacksburg. For more information contact tyounos@vt.edu.
- The Virginia Water Monitoring Council is hosting a watershed conference in Roanoke on September 25-27, 2002.
- The annual Virginia Water Resources Research Center Symposium will be held on November 6-7, 2002 in Richmond. A number of dignitaries are invited including Governor Warner, Secretary of Natural Resources Tayloe Murphy, DEQ Director Bob Burnley, and

others. More information is available on their website. Drinking water issues will be highlighted along with the drought.

Virginia Agribusiness Council

Sam Hamilton reported that the Council has been busy helping its members deal with drought issues. A meeting was held this week with DEQ and Green business (landscape architects, turf specialists, and sod farmers) to discuss issues of concern.

On September 27 the Governor is going to hold a forum at the State Fair from 2:00-3:00 p.m. on the state of agriculture in the Commonwealth.

CHILDREN'S GROUND WATER FESTIVALS

Mary Ann Massie provided updates on the two upcoming festivals:

The first Children's Ground Water Festival will be held on September 19, 2002 in Dickenson County for 214 sixth-grade students. There will be six sessions: 1) Down and Dirty with Soils, 2) Watershed, What's In It?, 3) Neck Deep In Litter, 4) Where Does Water Come From?, 5) Down the Drain, and 6) Mining and Ground Water: What Does Mining Have to Do With Ground Water?.

On September 27, 2002 another Ground Water Festival will be held for 120 sixth-grade students in Northumberland Middle School. This Festival be held at Camp Kittamagund Girl Scout Camp. There will be seven sessions: 1) Salt Marsh Players, 2) How Can I Protect Water Springing Into Action!, 3) Wetlands Soils in Color, 4) Getting the Ground Water Picture, 5) Capture, Store, and Release, 6)The Pucker Effect Water Testing, and 7) Common Water.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Steering Committee will be on Nov. 19, from 9 to 11 a.m., in the 7th floor conference room at DEQ headquarters in Richmond.